

# LINCOLN

*The Gift of Illinois*  
*to Mankind*



SULLIVAN


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# LINCOLN

## THE GIFT OF ILLINOIS TO MANKIND

AN ADDRESS BY  
ALEXANDER SULLIVAN



DELIVERED AT A BANQUET GIVEN  
BY THE ILLINOIS ATHLETIC  
CLUB, ON LINCOLN'S BIRTH-  
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1908



## FOREWORD

On the twelfth day of February, 1908 (Lincoln's birthday), at a banquet given in honor of the day, by the Illinois Athletic Club, Alexander Sullivan, of Chicago, delivered an address on Abraham Lincoln. The masterly grouping of the main features in the great president's life led to a request that the address be given as wide publicity as possible.

Rev. John Cavanaugh, president of Notre Dame University, one of the most gifted speakers in the United States, Prof. J. C. Monaghan, now of Notre Dame University, formerly of the University of Wisconsin, and later of the George Washington University, of Washington, D. C., wrote urging Mr. Sullivan to give the address to the public.

In compliance with these requests and the opinion of Professor Nathaniel

Butler, Dean of the College of Education of the University of Chicago, the address appears in its present form. The letters that led to the decision to reprint are herewith appended.

WILLIAM HALE THOMPSON,  
President The Illinois Athletic Club.

ILLINOIS ATHLETIC CLUB  
AUGUST 15, 1908

# LINCOLN

## *The Gift of Illinois to Mankind*

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THE subject I am to respond to is one of the easiest and one of the most difficult.

It is easy because of the great abundance and the great diversity of themes which flow from the mere mention of Lincoln's name. His life will be searched in vain for a day or an event barren of human interest. But the sentiment is a difficult one, because the many-sided qualifications of the man, the great depth and breadth of his knowledge and achievements, and the exceptional manner in which his life is intertwined with all the events of his own time and with the eternal principles of justice and freedom, would make it impossible in a long address to do more than give a mere flashlight vision of his marvelous career.

Born in a log cabin in the backwoods of Kentucky, he came into the world and lived his early boy life in

a poverty almost as great as that which surrounded the babe of Bethlehem. With indifferent mental training and without means, this backwoods boy started to seek a livelihood; what he was to do or whither he was to go he knew not. Looking longingly about him, although tarrying in Indiana his gaze lingered on Illinois; that great power of his to foresee the future led him to settle within her limits.

Ungainly, without experience, without credentials, armed only with resolution, physical strength, a clear mind, a pure conscience and a loyal soul, he began to struggle for mere bread and shelter.

## *[Lincoln, the Leader]*

Unendorsed stranger as he was, he associated with no group in which he was not soon a favorite and the leader. In the debate of the country store, or the country schoolhouse, in the rude but decent and warm hearted social gatherings of the pioneers among whom his lot was cast, he was the brightest in repartee, the leader in logic, the star in humor. On the flat-

boat, without any previous experience, he was the one to overcome difficulties, to release his craft when caught in the river-dam, and to guide its course through the dangerous eddies. On one of these trips, after delivering his cargo at New Orleans, he walked about the streets of that interesting city and got his first abhorrent view of slavery. He saw a beautiful octoroon girl offered for sale from the slave block, and heard the coarseness, the ribaldry and the blasphemy of the auctioneer and of the bestial wretches who surrounded the human auction block. Could they have heard this raw, uncouth, unattractive, penniless youth, as he witnessed the scene, they would have laughed in drunken derision when he said: "If I ever get a chance, I will hit that hard," and they would have asked how such a creature could ever hit hard or soft the great power of slavery.

But there is a spell surrounding his life and invading its every movement, which indicates a providential intention that it should be used as a divine instrument for great and far-reaching purposes; and one is forced to wonder if in the mind of Lincoln, even in those early days, there was not a conscious-

ness that the Almighty had in store a great task and a great destiny for him.

One cannot follow the life of Lincoln without the feeling that he was fore-ordained and created by Providence for a special purpose. His life from humble hut in Kentucky to the executive mansion of the greatest republic on earth illustrates American opportunity. His self-denial of his own cherished convictions exhibited an almost super-human power of restraint. The guidance of conscience is manifest in every chapter of his history.

This helpless lad, who said he would hit that hard if he ever could, became under Providence the power which by the scratch of a pen struck slavery not only hard, but even unto death.

Returning to Illinois, he became a grocery clerk, a volunteer in the Indian war, a rail splitter, a student in that great university lighted by the sun, moon and stars and covered by the dome of heaven, for he never had the opportunity of studying in a man-created college or university. He became a graduate of God's universal school.

He soon became a lawyer and legislator, state and national. Wherever

he went, he was the leader, his the master mind. At the bar he became the peer of Browning, Scott, Trumbull, David Davis and Leonard Swett.

## *[ The Coming Conflict ]*

The country was intensely stirred from ocean to ocean with the coming conflict, on one side of which must stand friends of the Union and Liberty, and on the other side the friends of slavery and secession.

When the extension of slavery into the territories became the chief topic of political discussion, all eyes focused and all minds agreed upon Lincoln as the man to speak for his side of the controversy against that prince of debaters, Stephen A. Douglas.

The series of debates between those giants attracted the attention of the entire country and helped to mould its future history.

I have said that wherever his lot was cast he was the leader. In those very debates he submitted to the greatest minds on his side of the controversy certain questions which he intended to propound to Mr. Douglas. His friends

protested that to one of them he must evoke an answer which would secure victory to Douglas in Illinois. Lincoln replied: "But I am playing for bigger game. The answer which will win Illinois for him must cost him the presidency." And it did. Despite their protests he submitted what he had prepared. Douglas became the senator, Lincoln remained the private citizen; but in the next advance Lincoln became the candidate of his united party, Douglas became the nominee of a fraction of his party. Lincoln was elected president.

### *[ He Triumphed without Making Enemies ]*

In all his conflicts with his fellow men, whether in the court or on the stump, he was recognized as the man of all men who could not resort to subterfuge or deception—who did not refrain from striking hard when discussing what he conceived to be unjust, dishonest, inhuman or treasonable, but there was something in his sweet and kindly nature which enabled him to secure the respect and affection of adversary as well as of comrade.



And wherever the "Wondrous Story" of our Illinois is told, it must always be recited with pride that when Lincoln was first sworn in as president, while the air was full of rumors of assault, aye, and of assassination, there stood beside him a brother from Illinois who by Lincoln's matchless eloquence and wonderful genius had been deprived of the prize for the gain of which his whole life had been bent. That brother, by his presence, notified those who had indulged in threats that no stone could be thrown, no shot fired at Abraham Lincoln which might not maim or pierce his own body. His presence proclaimed his guardianship over the person of his brother. In his own defeat he found solace and joy in the knowledge that the victor was his neighbor and brother, and humbly, loyally and fraternally he held the hat of that victorious brother, while the venerable chief justice was administering to him the oath of office. The friend overcame himself as adversary. The patriot conquered himself as the partisan, and the history of Illinois, humanity and American patriotism was enriched by the spectacle of the protecting, loving presence at Lincoln's

side of his former adversary, Stephen A. Douglas.

*[ His was the Master Mind  
in Washington ]*

In the executive mansion, Lincoln immediately showed his greatness by surrounding himself with the greatest men in his party. Only an intellectual giant could be at home in such company. Who but a giant could command Seward, Chase, Stanton and their cabinet colleagues, and in their company as in all others, be the guide, the leader, the master?

When Seward, supposed to be the most polished man of his party, its best equipped statesman, its keenest debater, its most scholarly advocate, prepared dispatches to foreign governments with whom our relations were threatening, Lincoln erased a word here, substituted a word there, and so modified the work of the secretary of state as to remove expressions which might give offence, but he preserved an unqualified declaration of all our rights.

The young student, who wishes to become an adept in expression as a master in style, will search in vain for

keener or more beautiful and effective evidences of the use, significance and shading of correct language than those found in Lincoln's revision of state papers prepared by the brilliant Seward.

The greatest of war ministers, so like Vesuvius in action, Edwin M. Stanton, was wont to thunder orders and roar defiance at Lincoln as he would at the humblest clerk in the department. The master knew so well the depth and earnestness of Stanton's patriotism that he could not rebuke him, and would not deprive the nation of his services.

With that patience, almost Joblike, which carried him through such trials as few men in the world's history have had to bear, he would quietly withdraw, but before he slept, a line to Stanton would proclaim who was master, and the poor boy who fell asleep on picket duty, but whose patriotism was not questioned, was pardoned; the note not requesting but directing the pardon was signed "A. Lincoln."

## [ *He Mastered Details* ]

It became Lincoln's duty to grapple with the most difficult situation which has ever been presented to an American president. He had to deal with the whole subject of the maintenance of the Union. It was his to see that foreign conflicts were avoided, it was his to provide the means to equip and pay the army and navy, to supply the munitions of war and to maintain civil government in all its ramifications. Upon him devolved the duty of commander in chief of the army and navy. How well, how skillfully, how thoroughly he performed that duty you will be told better than any mere civilian could tell you by the distinguished and accomplished officer who is to address you to-night on "Lincoln, the Commander in Chief."\*

The marvel of this period of intense excitement and strain is that Lincoln mastered and participated so much in the detail of administration. He was not content to do the great things which devolved upon him; he also did

\* Brig. Gen. W. H. Carter, U. S. A.

the smaller ones, and knew every branch of the government and its workings. Those who consulted him about the currency found him a master of the subject. Those who approached him concerning the restoration of our manufactures met one fully equipped with knowledge on that subject.

He signed the Homestead Law, his predecessor had vetoed it. By this act, the invitation so eagerly accepted was extended to the citizens of the overcrowded Eastern States and to that vast army of immigrants seeking homes and freedom in the new continent who took possession of our western prairies and converted them into granaries of the world and the homes of peace, prosperity, patriotism and religion.

With what wisdom he acted the world is familiar; for it was from the ranks of the brave immigrants of those days that there came a large portion of the boys in blue who saved the Union.

It is impossible to report the work of any department of the government without tracing the guiding hand of Abraham Lincoln during his term of office as president. He was great enough to grasp the largest subjects. He was patient enough to perform and

be familiar with the most ordinary and commonplace details.

He could by a joke or a story, and without anger, dismiss a bore. A New England delegation invited him to go to the treasury building and unfurl a flag which was to be presented to a regiment. Lincoln was kept standing on the treasury steps forty minutes listening to a tedious harangue. At its conclusion he stepped forward and said: "I will pull this flag up, if there is no defect in the machinery, but the people must keep it there." In a sentence the whole duty of the American people was stated. The tired president bowed, returned to his official servitude and boredom was rebuked. At another time while Secretaries Seward and Chase were awaiting the president on a subject of national importance two rival delegations full of anger and speech, called to discuss the claims of their respective candidates for a petty office. Lincoln tried in vain to escape, then shrewdly sent down to the cook for a big pair of scales. He tossed the recommendations on either side of the scales, picked out the heavier one and said to his secretary: "Tell the postmaster general to appoint this fel-

low." The insignificance of this petty contest, the unreasonableness of afflicting him with it, could not be shown more effectively. Yet he said no bitter word and made no enemy.

*[ Guided by the Constitution He  
Disregarded His Preferences ]*

Without malignity to the slaveholder, whose surroundings in many instances accounted for his views, Lincoln hated slavery as God hates sin, but in obedience to his oath of office and to the constitution of his country he refused to make war upon slavery and declared that it was his purpose to save the Union without violating the then constitutional rights of the slaveholders.

The extremists railed and accused him of perfidy, they cited his own denunciations of slavery, they reminded him of his biblical quotation that a house divided against itself could not stand. But he saw and did his duty.

With his love of peace and his love of liberty, he would have brought about the peaceful ending of slavery if the South could have known him then as it knew him later. He struck slavery,

not as soon as he would have liked to do so, but when slavery itself compelled the blow to be struck.

Thus, in his greater wisdom, he accomplished what was desired, so that the reasonable world could not complain of his time or method of action. When that time came, he had to brave another storm of criticism. As he resisted the extremist at one period so he resisted the conservative at the other and did his duty as he saw it without regard to either.

Lincoln had that self-confidence without which no man can be great. He had the moral strength to do what he conceived to be right, regardless of the opposition of friend or foe.

## *[ He Believed in God ]*

He made no demonstrative profession of religion. He belonged strictly to no creed, but he was a God-fearing and a God-loving man and breathed this spirit in all the stages of his life.

In his farewell address to his Springfield neighbors when starting for Washington, he said:

"I now leave, not knowing when or



whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance, I cannot fail.

"Trusting in Him who can go with me and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell."

He concluded his famous Gettysburg address with this sentence:

"It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last, full measure of devotion, that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

In that wonderful mastery of detail to which I have already referred, we find him on one of his visits to the war department discovering the debt of the

nation to a brave Massachusetts mother. Even as the Creator doth watch the sparrow's fall, so this tired, weary soul watched over the minutest details of the great struggle. Knowing what the great loss must have meant to the mother's heart he dragged himself from the war department back to the executive mansion and indited a letter, which will ever be a model of exquisite tenderness and sweet sympathy, and which repeats his faith in the Divine Being.

"Dear Madam:

"I have been shown in the files of the war department a statement of the adjutant general of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any word of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the republic they died to save.

"I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement and leave you only the cher-

ished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom."

## [ *His Class* ]

In what class shall we place our Lincoln? In what eternal company may we expect to find him?

Without being or intending to be irreverent, it seems easy to limit those who are entitled to his companionship.

The ten commandments thundered from Mount Sinai by Moses are the basis of all real religion, whatever its form or whatever the designation of its creed.

The emancipation proclamation of Lincoln forms the basis of all true government; it fixes the stigma upon slavery which the ten commandments fixed upon sin. The author of each was stricken down before he reached the promised land. If we were to find them in companionship in eternity, receiving the affectionate caresses of Him who died on Calvary, the vision would not surprise us, and it were difficult to decide whom else we could add to the group.

If we could conceive of a state with a soul like a human being, and if Illinois were called before the bar of Jehovah for final examination and asked what it had to say before judgment, we can imagine our State making this response:

*[ Illinois at the Bar of  
Judgment ]*

"I have reclaimed an imperial domain from the barrenness and barbarism of the Indian. My rich acres have fed the world and furnished homes and freedom to the impoverished and oppressed of all nations.

"To peace I have furnished laborer, mechanic, merchant, financier, inventor, explorer, artist, teacher, jurist, doctor and divine.

"One of mine, the personification of modesty and purity, is one of the highest judicial dignitaries in the civilized world and adorns his exalted position—Chief Justice Fuller.

"My people have dotted the land with factories, financial and commercial palaces, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, homes of charity and reformation,

and temples dedicated to the worship of the living God.

"Science, literature, music, all the fine arts, are nurtured and flourish within my boundaries, displacing and succeeding the filthy wigwam, the hideous tomtom, the beastly war dances where lust and plunder were the subjects and torture and massacre the arbiters of controversy.

"My commercial and financial fame is the synonym of integrity and enterprise.

"My metropolis—Queen City of the lakes and the prairies—is the world's theme and the world's admiration.

"In war, tens of thousands of my sons voluntarily poured out their rich blood that liberty might live. To their leadership I gave one, justly characterized by the immortal Sherman as the world's greatest volunteer general, my native son—Logan.

"I commissioned the persistent, invincible, silent Captain whose glory as a warrior was eclipsed only by his modesty, chivalry and generosity as a victor—Grant.

"But, in submitting to final judgment, I waive all these achievements and gifts

to humanity; and for the forgiveness of all my sins of omission or commission, and for the eternal benediction promised to the good and faithful servant, I am content to rely on the lustre of my adopted and best beloved son, for whom all the peoples and all the ages must remain my debtors forever and forever.

"I saw his grace through his awkwardness. I saw his purity through his poverty. I saw his genius through his humility.

"Through the sad, mystic, wonderful windows of his soul I beheld beauty in the face the world called homely.

"I trusted him. I took him to my heart in life; as in death, I gave resting place to his martyred ashes. I lifted him from step to step. My selection of him as my favorite son gave him first to the Nation, then to mankind.

"My faith in him, under God's guidance, gave unto his face, seared by struggles with adversity, softened by sorrow, illumined by charity, an influence which carried light to the hovel and hope to the heart of every enslaved creature of God throughout the Universe—Abraham Lincoln."

Letter of Rev. John Cavanaugh,  
President of Notre Dame University:

### University of Notre Dame

Notre Dame, Indiana, July 6, 1908.

Mr. ALEXANDER SULLIVAN,

605 Atwood Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

My dear Mr. Sullivan: I venture to suggest to you the desirability of circulating your admirable address on Lincoln among the schoolboys of our country. I have seldom been so impressed by the fitness of a discourse for educational purposes. In the first place, I believe your analysis has reached the essence of the man, and, therefore, our students will arrive at a correct estimate of one of the greatest of our country's sons. Secondly, a powerful influence, both for patriotism and for character, will be brought to bear on the lives of youth through your portrait of Lincoln. Besides, the discourse is a model from a literary point of view and I should like as many persons as possible to have the benefit of reading it as a matter of literary training. Finally, the concluding portion of it is admirably adapted for recitation in the schools.

I wish to congratulate you on having

produced one of the best addresses that have come to my knowledge. Unless I am mistaken, it is destined to live.

Yours very sincerely,  
JOHN CAVANAUGH, C. S. C.,  
President.

From Professor Nathaniel Butler,  
Dean of the College of Education of  
the University of Chicago.

## **The University of Chicago**

FOUNDED BY JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER

**The College of Education**  
**Office of the Dean**

July 27, 1908.

Mr. ALEXANDER SULLIVAN,  
605 Atwood Bldg., Chicago.

My dear Mr. Sullivan: I have read every word of your Lincoln address with intense interest. There is not a sentence that does not hold the attention closely, and no part of the address that does not "move on." You have introduced some very fine touches regarding Stephen A. Douglas, and your analysis of Lincoln's character is at once a mental photograph, and at the same time a picture with your own individual touches. You have been



wonderfully successful in avoiding the traditional biographical style, and again, you have done a thing most difficult, namely, you have combined the colloquial style of address with the dignity of oration, and all of this find suitable finish in the closing paragraph.

I thank you very much for permitting me to read the address.

Sincerely yours,  
NATHANIEL BUTLER.

Prof. J. C. Monaghan's letter:

### **Notre Dame University**

July 4, 1908.

Mr. ALEXANDER SULLIVAN,  
Chicago, Ills.

Dear Mr. Sullivan: I have found great pleasure in reading your masterly address on Lincoln, delivered before the Illinois Athletic Club, February 12, 1908. I am writing to ask you to arrange said address in pamphlet form for as wide publication as possible. The oration should be in every home in the country. It epitomizes Lincoln's life, it picks out and puts before our boys the best parts of the greatest, if not the sublimest, life in all our history, not excepting Washington.

It would be wicked to pass such a piece of work over to the annalists for the files; it should be sent out as an inspiration to our boys. I have read it a dozen times, each time with profit, and I am to teach my boy of fourteen to declaim a large part of it.

Sincerely yours,

J. C. MONAGHAN.

## PRESS NOTICES

The treatment of the great banquet, at which Mr. Sullivan's address was delivered, by the Chicago daily press, may be judged by the following extracts: The Inter Ocean said:

"The New Illinois Athletic Club celebrated its first Lincoln's birthday anniversary with a military banquet last night. Among the guests were officers from the regular army and the Illinois National Guard. The glitter of their uniforms amid the somber evening dress of the civilians made the ballroom a scene of unusual splendor.

"In the banquet hall more than 100 tables were spread, and at each plate waved a tiny silk American flag. A large flag with Lincoln's picture as a centerpiece formed the background for the speaker's table, at which uniformed officers and other guests of honor sat. General W. H. Carter, Commander of the Department of the Lakes, represented the regular army, responding to the toast, 'Lincoln, the Commander-in-Chief.' General Edward C. Young of the Illinois National Guard, represented

the citizen soldiery and responded to 'The National Guard of the Republic.' Dr. James B. McFatrach spoke on 'Lincoln, the Humble Man,' and Attorney Alexander Sullivan delivered the address of the evening, 'Lincoln, the Gift of Illinois to Mankind.'

### *[ Robert Lincoln Sends Regrets ]*

"Toastmaster William Hale Thompson read a letter of regret from Robert T. Lincoln, son of the martyred president, in which he expressed his regret at being unable to attend because of a feeling that it was better that he remain absent from affairs where the name of his illustrious father was being honored."

The Tribune, following its report of Mr. Sullivan's speech, said:

"As the speaker resumed his seat every one of the little silken flags that adorned the tables was seized and waved in the air, while the soldiers forgot their stiff parade uniforms and gold lace to throw their arms about in the air and cheer as loudly as their lungs would permit."







